

DANIEL: A PATTERN FOR PLEADERS NO. 3484

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*“O LORD, hear; O LORD, forgive; O LORD, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake,
O my God, for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.”*

Daniel 9:19

DANIEL was a man in very high position in life. It is true he was not living in his own native land but in the providence of God, he had been raised to great eminence under the dominion of the country in which he dwelt. He might, therefore, naturally have forgotten his poor kinsmen—many have done so. Alas! we have known some that have even forgotten their poor fellow Christians when they have grown in grace and have thought themselves too good to worship with the poorer sort when they have grown rich in this world's goods.

But it was not so with Daniel. Though he had been made a president of the empire, yet he was still a Jew—he felt himself still one with the seed of Israel. In all the afflictions of his people he was afflicted, and he felt it his honor to be numbered with them, and his duty and his privilege to share with them all the bitterness of their lot. If he could not become despised and as poor as they, if God's providence had made him to be distinguished, yet his heart would make no distinction—he would remember them and pray for them, and would plead that their desolation might yet be removed.

Daniel was also a man very high in spiritual things. Is he not one of God's three mighties in the Old Testament? He is mentioned with two others in a celebrated verse as being one of three whose intercessions God would have heard if he had heard any intercessions. But though thus full of grace himself (and for that very reason), he stooped to those who were in a low state.

Rejoicing as he did before God as to his own lot, he sorrowed and cried by reason of those from whom joy was banished. It is a sad fault with those Christians who think themselves full of grace, when they begin to despise their fellows. They may rest assured they are greatly mistaken in the estimate they have formed of themselves.

But it is a good sign when your own heart is fruitful and healthy before God, when you condescend to those who backslide, and search after such as are weak, and bring again such as were driven away. When you have, like your Master, a tender sympathy for others, then are you rich in divine things. Daniel showed his intimate sympathy with his poorer and less gracious brethren in the way of prayer. He would have shown that sympathy in other ways had occasions occurred, and no doubt he did—but this time the most fitting way of proving his oneness with them was in becoming an intercessor for them.

My object here and now will be to stir up the people of God, and especially the members of this church, to abound exceedingly in prayer—more and more to plead with God for the prosperity of His church and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

First, our text gives us *a model of prayer*. Secondly, *it and its surroundings give us encouragement for prayer*.

First, then, our text gives us—

I. A MODEL OF PRAYER.

I think I may notice this first as to the antecedents of the prayer. This prayer of Daniel *was not offered without consideration*. He did not come to pray as some people do, as though it were a thing that

required no forethought whatever. We are constantly told we ought to prepare our sermons and I surely think that if a man does not prepare his sermons he is very blameworthy.

But are we never to prepare when we speak to God, but only when we speak to man? Is there to be no preparation of the heart of man when we open our mouth before the Lord? Do not you think we often do, both in private and public, begin to pray without any kind of preparation, and the words come and then we try to quicken the words rather than the desires coming, and the words coming like garments to clothe them withal?

But Daniel's considerations lay in this, first—he studied the books. He had with him an old manuscript of the prophet Jeremiah. He read that through. Perceiving such and such things spoken of, he prayed for them. Perceiving such and such a time given, and knowing that that time was almost come, he prayed the more earnestly.

Oh! that you studied your Bibles more! Oh! that we all did! How we could plead the promises! How often we should prevail with God when we could hold Him to His Word and say, "Fulfill this word unto thy servant, whereon thou hast caused me to hope." Oh! it is grand praying when our mouth is full of God's Word, for there is no word that can prevail with Him like His own.

You tell a man, when you ask him for such and such a thing, "You yourself said you would do so-and-so." You have him then. And so when you can lay hold on the covenant angel with this consecrated grip, "Thou hast *said!* Thou hast *said!*" Then have you every opportunity of prevailing with Him. May our prayers then spring out of our Scriptural studies—may our acquaintance with the Word be such that we shall be qualified to pray a Daniel prayer.

He had, moreover, it is clear if you read the prayer, *studied the history of his people*. He gives a little outline of it from the day in which they came out of Egypt. Christian people should be acquainted with the history of the church—if not with the church of the past, certainly with the church of today.

We make ourselves acquainted with the position of the Prussian army and we will buy new maps about once a week to see all the places and the towns. Should not Christians make themselves acquainted with the position of Christ's army and revise their maps to see how the kingdom of God is progressing in England, in the United States, on the Continent, or in the mission stations throughout the world?

All our prayers would be much better if we knew more about the church—and especially about our own church. I am afraid I must say it—I am afraid there are some members of the church that do not know what is going on—hardly know what is meant by some of our enterprises. Brethren, know well the church's needs as far as you can ascertain them. And then, like Daniel, your prayer will be a prayer founded upon information—and with the promises of God and the fact of the church's wants, you will pray prayers of the Spirit, and of the understanding. Let that stand for earnest consideration.

But next, Daniel's prayer was *mingled with much humiliation*. According to the Oriental custom which expresses the inward thought and feeling by the outward act, he put on a coarse garment made of hair, black, called sackcloth, and then taking handfuls of ashes, he cast them on his head and over the cloth that covered him—and then he knelt down in the very dust in secret, and these outward symbols were made to express the humiliation which he felt before God.

We always pray best when we pray out of the depths—when the soul gets low enough she gets a leverage. Then we can plead with God. I do not say we ought to ask to see all the evil of our own hearts. One good man prayed that prayer very often. He is mentioned in some of the Puritan writers—a minister of the Gospel. It pleased God to hear his prayer and he never rejoiced afterwards. It was with great difficulty that he was even kept from suicide, so deep and dreadful was the agony he experienced when he did begin to see his sin as he wanted to see it. It is best to see as much of that as God would have us see of it.

You cannot see too much of Christ, but you might see too much of your sin. Yet, brethren, this is rarely the case. We need to see much of our deep needs, our great sins, for ah! that prayer shall go highest that comes from the lowest. To stoop well is a grand art in prayer. To pour out the last drop of

anything like self-righteousness. To be able to say from the very heart, "Not for our righteousness' sake do we plead with thee, O God, for we have sinned, and our fathers too."

Put the negative, the weightiest negative, upon any idea of pleading human merit. When you can do this, then are you in the right way to pray a prayer that will move the arm of God and bring you down a blessing. Oh! some of you ungodly ones have tried to pray, but you have not bowed yourselves. Proud prayers may knock their heads on mercy's lintel, but they can never pass through the portal. You cannot expect anything of God unless you put yourself in the right place, that is, as a beggar at His footstool—then will He hear you, and not until then.

Daniel's prayer instructs us in the next point. *It was excited by zeal for God's glory.* We may sometimes pray with wrong motives. If I seek the conversion of souls in my ministry, is not that a good motive? Yes, it is. But suppose I desire the conversion of souls in order that people may say, "What a useful minister he is"? That is a bad motive which spoils it all.

If I am a member of a Christian church and I pray for its prosperity, is not that right? Certainly, but if I desire its prosperity merely that I and others may be able to say, "See our zeal for the Lord! See how God blesses us rather than others!" that is a wrong motive. The motive is this, "Oh! that God could be glorified, that Jesus might see the reward of His sufferings! Oh! that sinners might be saved, so that God might have new tongues to praise Him, new hearts to love Him! Oh! that sin were put an end so that the holiness, righteousness, mercy, and power of God might be magnified!"

This is the way to pray—when your prayers seek God's glory, it is God's glory to answer your prayers. When you are sure that God is in the case, you are on a good footing. If you are praying for that which will greatly glorify Him, you may rest assured your prayer will speed. But if it does not speed, and it be not for His glory, why, then you may be better content to be without it than with it. So pray you, but keep your bowstring right—it will be unfit to shoot the arrow of prayer unless this be your bowstring—"God's glory, God's glory." This above all—first, last, and midst—must be the one object of your prayer.

Then coming closer to the prayer, I would have you notice *how intense Daniel's prayer was.* "O LORD, hear; O LORD, forgive; O LORD, hearken and do, defer not, for thine own sake." The very repetitions here express vehemence. It is a great fault of some people in public prayer when they repeat the name, "O Lord, O Lord, O Lord," so often—it often amounts to taking God's name in vain and is, indeed, a vain repetition.

But when the reiteration of that sacred name comes out of the soul, then it is no vain repetition—then it cannot be repeated too often and is not open to anything like the criticism which I used just now. So you will notice how the prophet here seems to pour out his soul with, "O Lord, O Lord, O Lord," as if, if the first knock at mercy's door does not open it, he will knock again and make the gate shake. And then the third time come with another thundering stroke if, perhaps, he may succeed.

Cold prayers ask God to deny them—only importunate prayers will be replied to. When the church of God cannot take "No" for an answer, she shall not have "No" for an answer. When a pleading soul *must* have it—when the Spirit of God works mightily in him so that he cannot let the angel go without a blessing, the angel shall not go till He has given the blessing to such a pleading one.

Brethren, if there be only one among us who can pray as Daniel did, with intensity, the blessing will come. Let this encourage any earnest man or woman here that fears that others are not excited to prayer as they should be. Dear brother, do you undertake it? Dear Sister, in God's name, do you undertake it? And God will send a blessing to many through the prayer of one.

But how much better would it be if many a score of men here, ay, the entire church of God, were stirred up to this, that we give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise on the earth! Oh! that our prayers could get beyond praying, till they got to agonizing. As soon as Zion travailed—you know that word—as soon as she *travailed* she brought forth children. Not till it comes to travail—not till then—may we expect to see much done. God send us such travailing to each one of us and then the promise is near to fulfilling.

But coming still to the text, and a little more closely, I want to observe that this remarkable prayer was *a prayer of understanding* as well as earnestness, for some people in their earnestness talk nonsense—and I think I have heard prayers which God might understand but I am sure I did not. Now here is a prayer which we can understand as well as God.

It begins thus, “O LORD, hear.” He asks an audience. This is how the petitioner does if he comes before an earthly majesty—he asks to be heard. He begins with that, O LORD, hear. I am not worthy to be heard. If You shut me and my case out of hearing, it will be just.” He asks an audience—he gets it—and now he goes at once to his point without delay, “O LORD, forgive.”

He knows what he wants. Sin was the mischief, the cause of all the suffering. He puts his hand on it. Oh! it is grand when one knows what one is praying for. Many prayers moulder and wander—the praying person evidently thinks he is doing a good thing in saying certain good phrases, but the prayer that hits the target in the center is the prayer it is good to pray. God teach us to pray so. “O LORD, forgive.”

Then observe how he presses the point home. “O LORD, hearken and do.” If You have forgiven—he does not stop a minute, but here comes another prayer quick on the heels of it—Do good Lord, interpose for the rebuilding of Jerusalem—do interpose for the redemption of Your captive people. Do interpose for the reestablishment of sacred worship.

It is well when our prayers can fly fast, one after another, as we feel we are gaining ground. You know in wrestling (and that is a model of prayer) much depends on the foothold, but oftentimes there is much depending upon swiftness and celerity of action. So in prayer. “Hear, me, my Lord! You have heard me, forgive me. Have I come so far, then work for me—work the blessings I want.”

Follow up your advantage—build another prayer on the answer that you have. If you have received a great blessing, say, “*Because* He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him. *Because* He has heard me once, therefore will I call again.” Such a prayer proves the thoughtfulness of him who prays. It is a prayer offered in the spirit and with understanding also.

And now one other thing. The prayer of Daniel was *a prayer of holy nearness*. You catch that thought in the expression, “O my God.” Ah! we pray at a distance oftentimes—we pray to God as if we were slaves lying at His throne-foot—as if we might, perhaps, be heard, but we did not know. But when God helps us to pray as we should, we come right to Him, even to His feet, and we say, “Hear me, O my God.”

He is *God*—therefore, we must be reverent. He is *my God*, therefore we may be familiar—we may come close to Him. I believe some of the expressions that Martin Luther used in prayer, if I were to use them, would be little short of blasphemy, but as Martin Luther used them I believe they were deeply devout and acceptable with God, because he knew how to come close to God.

You know how your little child climbs your knee. He gives you a kiss and he will say to you many little things that if a person in the market were to say, you could not bear—they must not be said. No other being may be so familiar with you as your child. But oh! a child of God—when his heart is right—how near he gets to his God. He pours out his childlike complaint in childlike language before the Most High.

Brethren, this is to be noted well, that though he is thus pleading and in the position of humility, yet still not in the position of slavery. It is still, “O my God”—He grasps the covenant. Faith perceives the relationship to be unbroken between the soul and God, and pleads that relation. “O my God.”

Now the last thing I shall call your attention to in this model prayer is this, that *the prophet uses argument*. Praying ought always to be made up of arguing. “Bring forth your strong reasons” is a good canon for a prevalent prayer. We should urge matters with God and bring reasons before Him—not because He wants reasons, but He desires us to know why we desire the blessing.

In this text we have a reason given, first, “Defer not for thine own sake,” as much as if he had said, “If You suffer this people of Yours to perish, all the world will revile thy name and Your honor will be

stained. This is thine own people and because they are Your property, suffer not thine own estate to be damaged, but save Jerusalem for thine own sake."

Then next, He puts it on the same footing in another shape, "For thy city and thy people." He urges that this people were not like other people. They had truly sinned, but still there was a relationship between them and God that existed between God and no other people. He pleads the covenant, in fact, between Abraham and Abraham's seed and the God of the whole earth. Good pleading that!

And then he puts in next, "For they are called by thy name." They were said to be JEHOVAH's people. They were named by the name of the God of Israel. "O God. Let not a thing that bears thy name be trundled about like a common thing. Suffer it not to be trailed in the dust—come to the rescue of it. Your stamp, Your seal is upon Israel. Israel belongs to You, therefore come and interpose."

Now from this I gather that if we would prevail we should plead arguments with God—and these are very many—and discreet minds when they are fervent will readily know how far to go in pleading and where to stop. I remember one morning a dear brother now present praying in a way that seemed to me to be very prevalent when He spoke thus, "O Lord, You have been pleased to call Your church, Your Bride. Now we, being evil, have such love towards our spouse that if there were anything in the world that would be for her good, we would not spare to give it to her. And will You not, O Husband of the church, do the like with Your spouse and let Your church receive a blessing, now that she pleads for it?"

It seemed good arguing, after Christ's own sort, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!" Get a promise and spread it before the Lord, and say, "O Lord, You have said it—do it." God loves to be believed in. He loves you to think He means what He says. He is a practical God Himself.

His word has power in it and He does not like us to treat His promises as some of us do, as if they were waste paper, as if they were things to be read for the encouragement of our enthusiasm, but not to be used as matters of real practical truth. Oh! plead them with God. Fill your mouths with reasoning and come before Him. Make this your determination, that as a church, seeing we need His Spirit and need renewed prosperity, we will not spare nor leave a single argument unused by which we may prevail with the God of mercy to send us what we want. Thus much, then, upon this as a model prayer.

Now I shall need a little longer time to speak upon—

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH THE TEXT AND ITS SURROUNDINGS GIVE TO US IN PRAYER.

Brethren, it is always an encouragement to do a thing *when you see the best of men doing it*. Many a person has taken a medicine only because he has known wiser men than himself take it. The best and wisest of persons in all ages have adopted the custom of prayer in times of distress and indeed, in all times. That ought to encourage us to do the same.

I heard a dear Welsh brother speak last Thursday evening, who interested and amused me too, but I cannot profess to repeat the way in which he told us a Biblical story. It was something in this way. He told it as a Welshman, and not quite as I think I might. He said that after the Lord Jesus Christ had gone up to heaven, having told His disciples to wait at Jerusalem till the Spirit of God was given, Peter might have said, "Well, now we must not go out preaching till this blessing comes, so I shall be off a-fishing."

And John might have said, "Well, there is the old boat over at the lake of Gennesaret. I think I shall go and see how that is getting on—it is a long time since I saw after it." And each one might have said, "Well, I shall go about my business, for it is not many days hence when He is coming, and we may as well be at our earthly calling."

"No," says he, "they did not say that at all, but Peter said, 'Where shall we hold a prayer meeting?' And Mary said she had got a nice large room that would do for a prayer meeting. True it was in a back street and the house was not very respectable and 'Besides,' says she, 'it is up at the very top of the house, but it is a big room.' 'Never mind,' says Peter, 'it will be nearer to heaven.' So they went into the upper room and there began to pray, and did not cease the prayer meeting till the blessing came."

Then the brother told us the next story of a prayer meeting in the Bible. Peter was in prison and Herod was so afraid that he would get out again that he had sixteen policemen to look after him, and the brethren knew they could not get Peter out in any other way than one—so they said, “We will hold a prayer meeting.” Always the way with the church at that time, when anything was amiss, was to say, “Where shall we have a prayer meeting?”

So Mistress Mark said she had got a good room which would do very well for a prayer meeting. It was in a back street, so nobody would know of it, and they would be quiet. So they held that prayer meeting and began to pray. I do not suppose they prayed the Lord to knock the prison walls down, nor to kill the policemen, nor anything of that kind, but they only prayed that Peter might get out—and they left how he was to get out to God.

While they were praying there came a knock at the door. “Ah!” said they, “that is a policeman come after another of us. But Rhoda went to the door to look, and when she looked she started back in affright. What did she see? She looked again, however, and she was persuaded that it was no other than Peter. She went back to her mistress and said, “There is Peter at the gate.”

Good souls! they had been praying that Peter might come out, but they could not believe it, and they said, “Why, it is his spirit—his angel.” “No,” said the girl, “I know Peter well enough. He has been here dozens of times and I know it *is* Peter”—and in came Peter, and they all wondered at their unbelief. They had asked God to set Peter free, and free Peter was.

It was the prayer meeting that did it. And rest assured we should, everyone, find it our best resource in every hour of need to draw near to God.

*“Prayer makes the darkest cloud withdraw,
Prayer mounts the ladder Jacob saw,
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above.*

*Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian armor bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.*

It is prayer that does it—and this fact should encourage us to pray.

The success of Daniel’s prayer is the next encouragement. He had not got to the end of his prayer before a soft hand touched him and he looked up—and there stood Gabriel in the form of a man. That was quick work surely. So Daniel thought, but it was much quicker than Daniel expected, for as soon as ever he began to pray, the word went forth for the angel to descend. The answer to prayer is the most rapid thing in the world. “Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear.”

I believe electricity travels at the rate of two hundred thousand miles in a second—so it is estimated, but prayer travels faster than that, for it is, “Before they call I will answer.” There is no time occupied at all. When God wills to answer, the answer may come as soon as the desire is given. And if it delay, it is only that it may come at a better time—like some ships that come home more slowly because they bring the heavier cargo.

Delayed prayers are prayers that are put out to interest awhile, to come home not only with the capital, but with the compound interest, too. Oh! prayer cannot fail—prayer cannot fail. heaven may as soon fall as prayer fail. God may sooner change the ordinances of day and night, than He can cease to reply to the faithful, believing spirit-wrought prayer of His own quickened, earnest, importunate people. Therefore, because He sends success, brethren, pray much.

It ought to encourage us, too, in the next place, to recollect that *Daniel prayed for a very hard case*. Jerusalem was in ruins. the Jews were scattered. Their sins were excessive. But nevertheless, he prayed

and God heard him. We are not in so bad a case as that with the church—we have not to mourn that God has departed from us—our prayer is that He may not, even in any measure, withdraw His hand.

I do pray God that I may long be buried ere He shall suffer this church to lose His presence. There is nothing that I know of in connection with our church life that is worth a single farthing, if the Spirit of God be gone. He must be there. Brethren, if you are not prayerful, if you are not holy, if you are not earnest, God will not keep pastors, deacons, elders, and church members living near to Him.

The sorrow of heart which one will feel if one is kept right cannot be expressed. May the Lord prevent our declining. If you are declining, may He bring you back. Some of you, I am afraid, are so—getting cold. Now and then I hear of a person who finds it too far to come to the Tabernacle. It used to be very short at one time, though it was four or five miles. But when the heart gets cold, the road gets long.

Ah! there are some who want this little attention and the other. Time was when they stood in the aisle, in the coldest and draftiest place—if the Word was blessed to them, they did not mind it. May God grant that you may be a living people always, for years and years to come, until Christ Himself comes. But oh, you that are living near to God, make this your daily, hourly, nightly prayer, that He would not withdraw from us for our sins, but continue to stretch out His hand in lovingkindness, even until He gathers us to our Father.

It ought, further, to encourage us in prayer to remember that Daniel was only one man, and yet he won his suit. But if two of you agree as touching any one thing, it shall be done—but a threefold cord, a fifty-fold cord—oh! if out of our four thousand members, every one prayed instantly, day and night, for the blessing, oh! what prevalence there would be. Would God it were so!

Brethren, how about your private prayers—are they what they should be? Those morning prayers, those evening prayers, and that mid-day prayer, for surely your soul must go up to heaven, even if your knees are not bent—are those prayers as they should be? It will bring leanness upon you—there cannot be a fat soul and neglected prayer. There must be much praying if there be much rejoicing in the Lord.

And then your family prayers—do you keep them up? I was in a railway carriage the other day and a gentleman said to me, who was sitting beside me, “My son is going to be married tomorrow—going to be married to one of your members.” “I am glad to hear it,” I said. “I hope he is a believer.” “Oh! yes, sir. He has been a member of your church for some years. I wish you would write me something to give them tomorrow.”

Well, you know how the carriage will shake, but I managed to jot down something on a little bit of paper with a pencil. The words, I think, that I put were something like this, “I wish you every joy. May your joys be doubled. May your sorrow be divided and lightened.” But then I put, “Build the altar before you build the tent. Take care that daily prayer begins your matrimonial life.” I am sure we cannot expect our children to grow up a godly seed if there is no family prayer. Are your family prayers, then, what they ought to be?

Then next, let me say to each one, how about your prayers as members of the church? Perhaps I am the last person that might complain about a prayer meeting. It really is a grand sight to see so many of you, but I must confess I don’t feel quite content, for there are some members whom I used to see, but don’t see now. I know I see some fresh ones and we are never short of praying men, but I want to see the others as well.

I know those who are constantly at prayer meetings can say it is good to be there. It is the best evening in the week often to us, when we come together to entreat for the blessing. Do not, I pray you, get into the habit of neglecting the assembling of yourselves together for prayer. How often have I said, “All our strength lies in prayer!”

When we were very few, God multiplied us in answer to prayer. What prayers we put up night and day when we launched out to reach the Gospel in a larger building! And what an answer God sent us. Since then, in times of need and trouble we have cried to God and He has heard us. Daily He sends us help for our college, for our orphanage, and for our other works, in answer to prayer.

Oh! you that come here as members of the church, if you do not pray, the very beams out of these walls and the stones will cry out against you. This house was built in answer to prayer. If anybody had said that we, who were but few and poor, could have erected such a structure, I think it would have sounded impossible.

But it was done—you know how readily it was done, how God raised us up friends, how He has helped us to this day. Oh! don't stop your prayers. You seem to me, good people, to be very like that king who, when he went to the dying prophet, was told, "Take your arrows and shoot" and he went to the window, and he shot but once—and the prophet was angry and said—"Thou shouldest have shot many times, and then thou wouldest have utterly destroyed thy enemies." And so we pray, as it were, but little. We ask but little, and God gives it. Oh! that we would ask much and pray for much—and shoot many arrows, and plead very earnestly.

Look at this city of ours. I would not say a word in derogation against my country, but I am afraid there is not much to choose between the sin of London and the sin of Paris. And see what has come of Paris! One could hardly live in that city and know all the sin that was going on there without fearing that national sin would bring a national chastisement.

And oh! this wicked City of London, with its dens of vice and filthiness! You are the salt of the earth, you that love Christ, let not your salt lose its savor. God forbid that you should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for this wicked people. Everywhere, sea and land is compassed by the adversaries of the truth to make proselytes. I beseech you, compass the mercy seat, that their machinations may be defeated.

At this time there ought to be special prayer. When God in providence seems to be shaking the Papacy to its base, now should we cry aloud and spare not. Out of these convulsions God may bring lasting blessings. Let us not neglect to work when God works. Let the hand of the man be lifted up in prayer when the wing of the angel is moved in providence. We may expect great things if we can pray greatly and wrestle earnestly.

I call you in God's name, to the mercy seat. Draw near thither, with intense importunity—and such a blessing shall come as you have not yet imagined. Pray for some here present that are unconverted. There are a good many of them. They will not pray for themselves—let us pray them into prayer. Let us pray to God for them, until they, at last pray God for themselves. Prayer can mercy's door unlock, for others as well as for our own persons. Let us, therefore, abound in prayer, and God, send us the blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

DANIEL 9:1-11

Veres 1-2. *In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.*

Daniel was himself a prophet, but he studied the inspired prophecies of Jeremiah. If such a man need read Scripture, how much more ought we! Whatever light we may suppose to dwell within us, we shall do well to walk by the mere sure word of prophecy.

3-5. *And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:*

Daniel certainly had rebelled less than any of his countrymen and yet he is the first to make confession on their behalf. So, my brethren, when we have confessed our own sins, and have found mercy, then we should begin to be intercessors for others. We should make confession for the sins of our families, for the sins of our city, for the sins of our country. If no longer need we plead for salvation for ourselves because we have obtained it, let us give the full force of our prayers for the benefit of others.

6. *Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.*

It greatly increases sin when we sin against warnings sent from God. Daniel confesses this.

7-9. *O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;*

What a gracious verse that is! Surely it might be printed in letters of gold, and every trembling, penitent sinner might look at it till at last beams of light should dart into the darkness of his despair.

10-11. *Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.*

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